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## **Branch Alliance for Educator Diversity to Induct Fourth Group of Teacher Preparation Programs into Rigorous Transformation Center**

- Transformation Centers Intentionally Infuse Equity into Programming
- New Participants Include Valdosta State University, the University of San Diego, California Lutheran University, Texas A&M University Central Texas, and Fort Valley State University

**PEACHTREE CITY, GEORGIA** — A national leader in transforming teacher preparation programs to produce diverse, high-quality educators, Branch Alliance for Educator Diversity (BranchED) launched its fourth National Teacher Preparation Transformation Center cohort in Spring 2023 to foster diverse, high-quality educators.

The five Transformation Center inductees include Valdosta State University's (VSU) Dewar College of Education and Human Services in Valdosta, Georgia, the University of San Diego's (USD) School of Leadership and Education Sciences in San Diego, Calif., California Lutheran University's (CLU) Graduate School of Education in Thousand Oaks, Calif., Texas A&M University Central Texas' (TAMUCT) College of Education and Human Development in Killeen, Texas, and Fort Valley State University's (FVSU) College of Education and Professional Studies in Fort Valley, Georgia.

"The educator preparation programs participating in the Transformation Center are ensuring program equity such that graduates are diverse, highly effective and equity focused. They are committed to working in tandem with their school district partners," Cassandra Herring, Ph.D., BranchED founder, president, and CEO said, adding, "The Transformation Centers facilitate context-based preparation and a smooth transition into the teaching profession."

Through participation in the Transformation Center—a three-year experience—these universities join a unique community of practice where each institution's faculty and their respective school district partners can access enhanced resources and professional development, network with others, share data and learn from each other to move forward with sustainability and innovation. The Transformation Center supports BranchED's larger goals of

both diversifying the teaching profession and intentionally addressing critical issues of educational equity for all students.

Dean of **Valdosta State University's** Dewar College of Education and Human Services David Slykhuis, Ph.D., said, "While we are just starting our journey as a Transformation Center, we are already seeing the benefits! The ties between Valdosta State University and Valdosta City Schools have grown tighter, leading us to find commonalities, challenges, and most importantly opportunities that we didn't know previously existed! We are very excited about where this journey will take us and are firm in our belief that this process will result in a better program, better teacher candidates, and a better experience for K-12 students!"

"Marking an exciting milestone in our commitment to fostering equitable education and promoting diversity within our PK-12 classrooms, the School of Leadership and Education Sciences at the **University of San Diego** is thrilled to embark on this critical and timely partnership with Branch Alliance for Educator Diversity and the Chula Vista School District," Dean Kimberly White-Smith, Ed.D., said. "We recognize the positive impact on student academic attainment that representation, culturally responsive and sustaining practices, and the role models that teachers of color can become for students who share their backgrounds, experiences, and aspirations. Through this partnership, we aim to remove systemic barriers and create an environment that not only attracts talented educators of color, but also provides them with the necessary ecosystem of support and tools to excel in their profession."

"The professional development training provided to faculty through BranchEd workshops allowed for opportunities to collaborate with colleagues across the United States," **TAMUCT's** Jeffrey L. Kirk, Ph.D., dean of the College of Education and Human Development said.

"Likewise, faculty participating in professional development embedded effective instructional strategies into coursework that allowed students to: (a) practice and hone teaching practices via Mixed Reality Simulations; and (b) engage in critical discussions about difficult situations that might occur in their future classrooms through the use of vignettes," he added.

"We are excited to partner with the Branch Alliance for Educator Diversity in our efforts to transform our teacher preparation programs and contribute to educator diversity," Dean Michael R. Hillis, Ph.D., dean of **California Lutheran University's** Graduate School of Education. "In our initial year of operation, we are pleased to report that we have been able to recruit a full

cohort of Latinx teacher candidates and the support we have received from BranchED has been instrumental in this work. We look forward to the continued partnership as we strive to diversify our teacher preparation pools,” he added.

Beth Day-Hairston, Ph.D., dean of **FVSU**'s College of Education and Professional Studies, said, “BranchED is instrumental in providing the resources needed to transform teacher education at Fort Valley State University to prepare candidates who are equity-minded, inclusive and can meet the needs of diverse students,” explaining, “Through an intensive nurturing and data-informed process, BranchED is planting the seeds to help cultivate, enhance, and strengthen faculty skillset that ultimately helps our candidates' teacher effectiveness as we prepare them to enter the education field armed with research-based practices to reach all children.”

Dr. Herring, the 2023 recipient of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education's Edward C. Pomeroy Award for Outstanding Contributions to Teacher Education and the Dr. Gloria Ladson Billings Award given by the HBCU Teacher Education Topical Action Group, launched BranchED's first cohort for its National Teacher Preparation Transformation Center in 2018. BranchED's Transformation Center is rooted in its work to redefine what constitutes quality educator preparation through commitment to a collective vision that combines “quality” and “diversity” in reflection of the changing demographics in the U.S.

BranchED focuses on enhancing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of individuals and institutions from PK-12 and higher education within the Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) [*reference the MSI Designation Chart below*] educator preparation program (EPP) ecosystem. The organization engages with MSI EPPs, their partners and prospective candidates to develop strong teacher candidate pipelines to boost program enrollment and graduation.

[Official U.S. MSI designations are defined in the chart below.]

**U.S. Minority Serving Institution Designations**

<b>Designation</b>	<b>Requirement for Eligibility</b>
Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-serving Institutions (ANNHs)	Institutions that have an undergraduate enrollment that is at least 20% Alaskan Native students or institutions that have an undergraduate enrollment that is at least 10% Native Hawaiian students
Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-serving Institutions (AANAPISIs)	Institutions that have an enrollment of undergraduate students that is at least 10% Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander students
Hispanic-serving Institutions (HSIs)	Institutions that have an undergraduate enrollment that is at least 25% Hispanic students
Historically Black College or Universities (HBCUs)	Designated by the Higher Education Act of 1965
Native American-serving non-Tribal Institutions (NASNTIs)	Institutions that are not Tribal Colleges and Universities that have an undergraduate enrollment that is at least 10% Native American students
Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs)	Institutions that are not HBCUs that have an undergraduate enrollment that is at least 40% Black students
Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs)	Designated by the Higher Education Act of 1965

**About BranchED**

Based in Peachtree City, Georgia, with an office in Austin, Texas, Branch Alliance for Educator Diversity is the first and only non-profit organization in the nation dedicated to strengthening and growing educator preparation at Minority Serving Institutions, with broader goals of both diversifying the teaching profession and intentionally addressing critical issues of educational equity for all students. BranchED has expanded its reach into K-12 by supporting principal coaching and development. To learn more about BranchED and its Transformation Center, please visit [www.educatordiversity.org](http://www.educatordiversity.org) or call 800-519-0249.

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